

What is claimed is:

[Claim 1] 1. A powered vehicle (10) comprising,
a frame (14),
first and second drive wheels (12) coupled to said frame along a horizontal axis (16), each of said drive wheels designed and arranged to be capable of powered clockwise and counter-clockwise rotation independent of the other,
first and second support wheels (28) mounted to said frame, each of said support wheels designed and arranged to be capable of freewheel rotation about an independent horizontal axis and freewheel swiveling about an independent vertical axis,
at least one control mechanism (42, 44, 46, 48) arranged and designed to control the direction of rotation and the speed of said first and second drive wheels, and
a hitch assembly coupled to said frame, disposed generally centered between said first and second drive wheels above said horizontal axis, and designed and arranged to mate with a semi-trailer (56).

[Claim 2] 2. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein said hitch assembly comprises,
a fifth wheel plate (20),
an articulating arm (22) coupled between said fifth wheel plate (20) and said frame (14), said arm (22) designed and arranged to allow said fifth wheel plate to be raised and lowered, and
an actuator (24) coupled between said fifth wheel plate (20) and said frame (14) and designed and arranged to raise and lower said fifth wheel plate (20).

[Claim 3] 3. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein said hitch assembly comprises,
a pintle hitch (25).

[Claim 4] 4. The vehicle of claim 1 further comprising
an operator seat (32) rotatably mounted on said frame (14).

[Claim 5] 5. The vehicle of claim 4 further comprising

a first control lever (42) positioned on a first side of said operator seat (32), said first control lever operatively coupled to a first motor (40) for controlling the speed and direction of rotation of said first drive wheel (12), and a second control lever (42) positioned on a second side of said operator seat (32), said second control lever operatively coupled to a second motor (40) for controlling the speed and direction of rotation of said second drive wheel (12).

[Claim 6] 6. The vehicle of claim 5 further comprising,

a third control lever (42) positioned on said first side of said operator seat (32), said third control lever operatively coupled to said first motor (40) for controlling the speed and direction of rotation of said first drive wheel (12), and

a fourth control lever (42) positioned on said second side of said operator seat (32), said fourth control lever operatively coupled to said second motor (40) for controlling the speed and direction of rotation of said second drive wheel (12).

[Claim 7] 7. The vehicle of claim 1 further comprising

a first outrigger (26) having near and distal ends, said near end of said first outrigger coupled to said frame (14) and said distal end of said first outrigger rotatably coupled to said first support wheel (28), and

a second outrigger (26) having near and distal ends, said near end of said second outrigger coupled to said frame (14) and said distal end of said second outrigger rotatably coupled to said second support wheel (28).

[Claim 8] 8. The vehicle of claim 1 further comprising,

a cab (30) coupled to said frame (14) and enclosing said seat (32).

[Claim 9] 9. The vehicle of claim 8 wherein,

a rear portion (54) of said cab (30) has an opening sized to allow an operator to pass through.

[Claim 10] 10. The vehicle of claim 1 further comprising,

a supply of air (38) fluidly coupled to an air hose (64) for coupling to said semi-trailer.

[Claim 11] 11. The vehicle of claim 2 further comprising,
a pintle hitch (25).

[Claim 12] 12. The vehicle of claim 2 further comprising,
an operator seat (32) rotatably mounted on said frame (14), wherein
said fifth wheel plate (20) is designed and arranged to be raised to a
height and said operator seat (32) is disposed at an elevation sufficient for an
operator (5p0) seated in said operator seat and facing said raised fifth wheel
plate has a generally horizontal line of sight (60) which passes underneath said
semi-trailer (56) which is hitched to said fifth wheel plate, said line of sight
extending to the distal end of said trailer.